

## Council Policy – Recognition of Aboriginal Culture and History

<b>Responsible Directorate</b>	Community Development
<b>Responsible Business Unit/s</b>	Communities
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Manager Communities
<b>Affected Business Unit/s</b>	All

### Objective

To provide clear guidelines to the Shire of Ashburton (the Shire) elected members and employees to recognise the unique position of Aboriginal people in Australian culture and history.

Aboriginal people are the original custodians/traditional owners of the land. It is important this unique position is recognised to enable the wider community to share in Aboriginal culture and heritage, facilitating better relationships between Indigenous people and other Australians.

### Scope

This policy applies to all elected members and employees of the Shire.

### Policy Statement

These guidelines apply to all elected members and employees responsible for organising events, functions, ceremonies and meetings where 'Acknowledgement of Country' or 'Welcome to Country' ceremonies should be included in official proceedings.

### Acknowledgement of Country

#### Appropriate place

When planning an official event, elected members or employees should ensure that an Acknowledgement of Country is delivered where possible. An Acknowledgement of Country should be given by a speaker at the beginning of the event.

#### Events

An Acknowledgement of Country should be given at events including, but are not limited to, the following:

- Significant events where members of the public, representatives of governments and/or the media are present,
- Council meetings; and

- Forums, conferences, briefing sessions, and major workshops, where the public are present.

## Phraseology

For events, it is proposed the following will be read out:

*“On behalf of the Shire of Ashburton, we respectfully acknowledge the local Indigenous people, the traditional custodians of this land on which we are gathering today and pay our respects to them and all their elders both past and present.*

For Council meetings, the following will be read out and this may rotate amongst each elected member on a voluntary basis:

*As representatives of the Shire of Ashburton Council, we respectfully acknowledge the local Indigenous people, the traditional custodians of this land where we are meeting upon today and pay our respects to them and their elders past and present.*

## Welcome to Country

### Appropriate place

Steps should be taken to ensure that the appropriate representative is invited to perform the Welcome to Country, as it is a significant recognition and formal process.

A Welcome to Country should always occur at the opening of the event, preferably as the first item in the order of proceedings.

### Events


Events for a Welcome to Country include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Significant events involving the State/Federal government,
- Significant civic functions/ceremonies and significant launches/openings of new buildings.

The Welcome to the Country is conducted by a recognised representative/s of the relevant local Aboriginal community.

A Welcome to the Country may consist of a single speech by the representative of the local Aboriginal community, or it may also include a performance of some description. For example, a:

- traditional welcoming song,
- traditional dance,
- didgeridoo performance,
- smoking ceremony, or
- combination of any of the above.



It is necessary for the speaker who follows immediately after the Welcome to Country ceremony to provide a response. Part of the response should acknowledge the person who delivered the Welcome to Country.

The following is a suggested response:

*I would like to, as a Shire of Ashburton representative, highlight that we too pay our respects to the local Indigenous people, the traditional custodians of this land where we are gathering here today. On behalf of the traditional custodians, past and present, we welcome you all to today's event.*

### Other recognition actions

There are other actions the Shire can undertake to further enhance the recognition of Aboriginal culture and Council wishes to use the following means to do that by including the following statement in key documents, namely its Community Strategic Plan, Corporate Business Plan, and Council agenda and minutes as well as its official webpage:

*The Shire of Ashburton respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land.*

### Cultural protocols to be observed

There are certain indigenous protocols that must be observed (noting that in most cases, members of the Aboriginal community will advise of appropriate/inappropriate behaviour and/or if they are not permitted to discuss the protocol or ceremony with employees because of age, gender, status etc:

- The practice of not mentioning the name of a deceased Aboriginal person, or displaying photographic images of a deceased person unless agreed and approved by the relevant family,
- Sensitivity to knowledge that is specific to gender (commonly referred to as 'Women's Business' or 'Men's Business'); and appropriate acknowledgement of guest artists that are either from or supported by the local community.

### Definitions

**Acknowledgement of Country** is an acknowledgement of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custodians/traditional owners of land to pay respect to them. It is a means by which all people can show respect for the Aboriginal culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the traditional custodians have with the land. The Acknowledgement of Country can be performed by any person, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

**Traditional custodians** mean a local descent group of Aboriginals who:

- have common spiritual affiliations to a site on the land, being affiliations that place the group under a primary spiritual responsibility for that site and for the land, and
- are entitled by Aboriginal tradition to forage as of right over that land.

**Welcome to Country** is where the traditional Aboriginal custodians' welcome people to their land by providing historical and cultural information to the people in attendance.

## Relevant policies/documents

Nil

## Relevant legislation/local laws

*Local Government Act 1995* - section 3.1(1A)(b)(i)

Office use only				
Relevant delegations	Nil			
Council adoption	Date	13 December 2022	Resolution #	171/2022
Reviewed/modified	Date	15 July 2025	Resolution #	125/2025
	Date		Resolution #	
	Date		Resolution #	
	Date		Resolution #	
Next review due	2029			